



## ***EDUCATION COMMITTEE***

March 7, 2016

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 96% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

### **HB 5551, "An Act Concerning the Commissioner's Network of Schools"**

This bill, would among other things, give the Department of Education increased control over schools in the Commissioners' Network and allow for inter-district staffing changes to accommodate staffing needs based on turnaround models.

Education is the largest item in municipal budgets. In some towns it equates to as much as 80% of the municipality's total budget. CCM supports targeted investments and legislative efforts aimed at closing the achievement gap. However, **CCM has concerns that this bill may negatively impact municipal budgets and reduce local control of education.**

In particular, CCM is concerned with the punitive language in lines 595-600. The cost of providing educational services at the municipal level have continued to rise while municipal aid has remained relatively flat funded. Accordingly, municipal reliance on the property tax to fund public education has continued to increase. Potential reductions in municipal aid for education would be harmful to already struggling school districts and be counterproductive to efforts aimed at closing the achievement gap.

CCM also has concerns with language in lines 113-120 mandating the Commissioner to appoint members to a turnaround committee. While this language identifies "...members of the community of the district, and representatives of the district..." it does not specifically mention Local Chief elected Officials. Municipal officials have direct experience in addressing local issues pertaining to education and we believe they would be an invaluable addition to the turnaround committee.

Additionally, CCM is concerned with language beginning on line 385 that allows for inter-district staffing changes to accommodate staffing needs based on turnaround models. It is unclear how these changes may impact municipal budgets and staffing needs. While well intentioned, the recommendations made by the turnaround committee may not take into account the fiscal climate or staffing needs of a particular municipality and the implementation could have an adverse effect on local school districts.

CCM urges the Committee to **take no action** on HB5551.

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If you have any questions, please contact Daniel C. Giungi, Senior Legislative Associate for CCM, at [dgiungi@ccm-ct.org](mailto:dgiungi@ccm-ct.org) or (203) 498-3023.